Extension to News and Current Affairs

4116. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had given an extension of six months to the news and current affairs channels to raise the equity based of the Indian partners to 51 per cent;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the names of the news channels yet to conform to the norms for increasing the equity share of the domestic partners to 51 per cent; and

(d) how many extensions have been served so far to these channels?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) The Government has extended the deadline upto 30th September, 2005 for the existing News and Current Affairs TV channels to comply with the eligibility criteria for uplinking of News and Current Affairs TV Channels from India.

(b) The extension has been given to examine certain problems and legal issues concerning the foreign investment regime and majority Indian shareholding in respect of existing channels.

(c) The following companies are required to comply with the provisions of the guidelines:

(1) Jeevan Telecasting Corporation Ltd.

(2) Jain Studios Ltd.

(3) Zee Telefilms Ltd.

(4) Sri Adhikari Brothers Television Network Ltd.

(5) Broadcast Worldwide Ltd.

(6) Sky (B) Bangla Pvt. Ltd.

(7) Television Eighteen India Ltd.

(d) Four extensions have been granted so far.

Guidelines to broadcasters on equal time policy

4117. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that advanced and developed countries have guidelines for all the private broadcasters and Government Information and Media to follow the "FAIRNESS Doctrine" or "Equal Time Policy",

(b) the extent to which Government would ensure that news media, audio media, visual media would give equal time to all the political parties and private individuals in the media;

(c) whether there are any such guidelines presently in operation or force;

(d) the steps taken by Government to first bring Government media like Doordarshan a strict follower of the principles of Equal Time Policy; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (e) Prasar Bharati has informed that AIR and Doordarshan follow a policy drawn up by Election Commission of India that provides for allotment of airtime on their National/Regional Network to recognized political parties for political broadcasts during the run up to Parliamentary elections and State Assembly elections AIR and Doordarshan also include political coverage in their news bulletins etc. on the basis of newsworthiness in a fair and balanced manner.

Financial irregularities in purchase of video projections and equipments

4118. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the serious financial irregularities have been committed by the various departments of his Ministry in the process of procurement of video projections and other equipments;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the terms and conditions were also not adhered to; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) No financial irregularity has come to the notice of the Government in purchase of video projections and other